

The background of the slide is a photograph of a large, multi-story university building with a grid of windows. The building is partially obscured by lush green trees on the right side. In the foreground, there is a paved area and a person walking away from the camera. The overall scene is bright and clear.

**The mental health of parents
and their children
- a GP perspective**

**Professor Colin Bradley
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University College Cork**

for the Patients. Parents. People. conference, Barnardos, Croke Park, 19th June 2014

Talk Outline

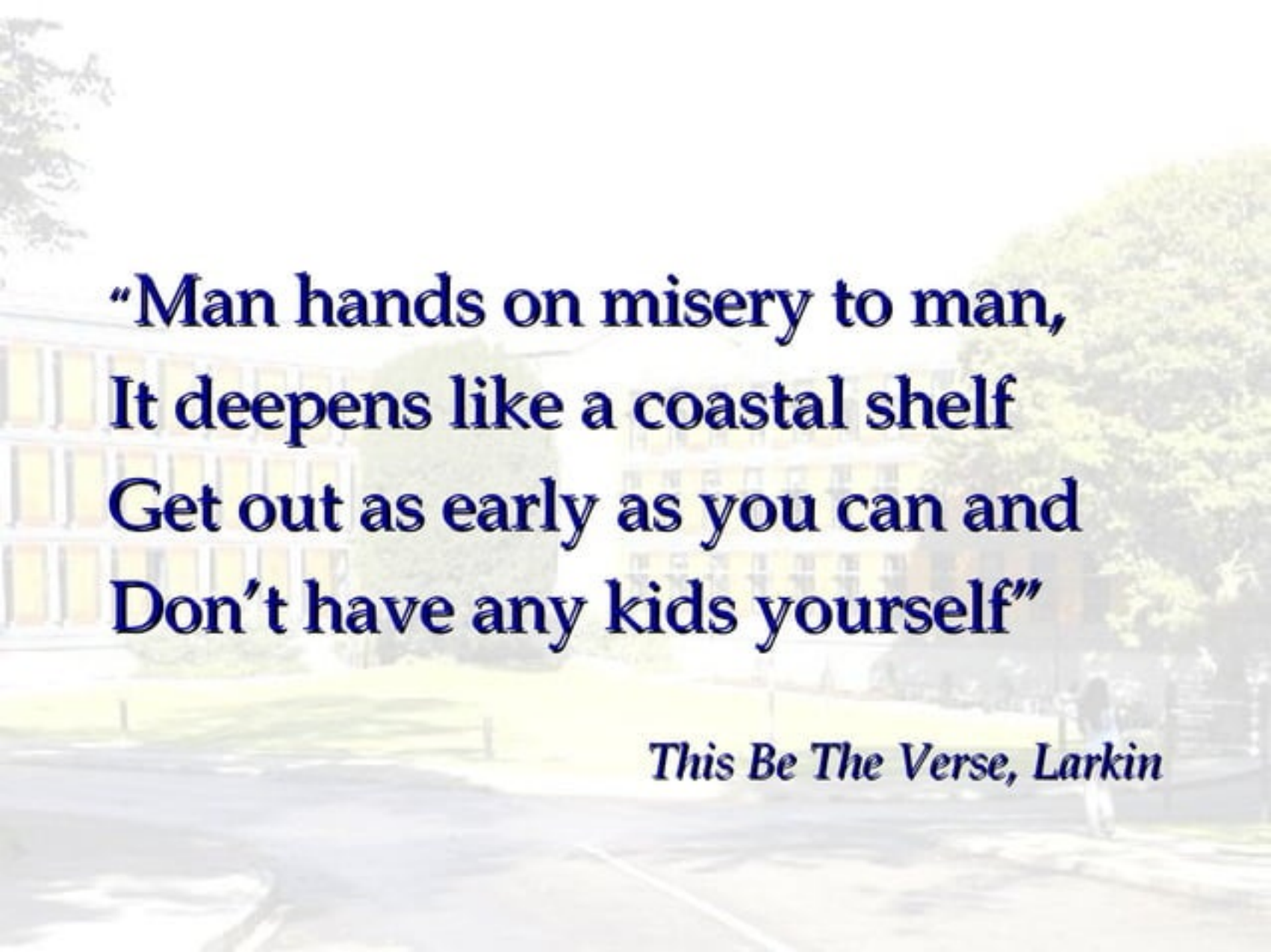
- Psychological and social problems faced by parents
- Medical responses to these
 - Pharmacological
 - Non pharmacological
- Mental ill health in children
 - Diagnosis
 - Management
- Community based family supports
- Inter agency working
 - Confidentiality issues

Psychological and social problems faced by parents

- **Poverty**
- **Educational disadvantage**
- **Lack of opportunity**
- **Unemployment**
- **Unhealthy life-styles**
- **Anxiety**
- **Depression**
- **Substance misuse**
- **Intra-familial violence and abuse**

Impact on children of parental mental ill health

- **Michael Rutter 1966 - Children of sick parents**
- **Paul Ramchandani & Alan Stein 2003 - Impact of parental psychiatric disorder on children (BMJ)**
- **SCIE (UK, 2009) Think child, think parent, think family**
- **Justine Horgan for NCAD (Ireland, 2011) Parental Substance Misuse: Addressing its Impact on Children**



**“Man hands on misery to man,
It deepens like a coastal shelf
Get out as early as you can and
Don’t have any kids yourself”**

This Be The Verse, Larkin

The Medical Response

- The medical model
 - History, examination, investigation → Diagnosis
 - Diagnosis → Treatment
- Treatment
 - Pharmacological
 - Non- pharmacological
- Very individually focussed
 - have you any children? - not usually asked

Pharmacological Treatments for mental ill health

- Benzodiazepines
- Non-benzodiazepine hypnotics (e.g. Stilnoct®)
- Anti-depressants
 - Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (e.g. Prozac®)
 - Others e.g. TCAs, SNRI, MAOIs etc.
- Anti-convulsants e.g. Lyrica®
- Anti-psychotics e.g. Seroquel®

Non-pharmacological treatments

- Cognitive behaviour therapy
- Skills based training
- Counselling
- Supportive psychotherapy
- Psychoanalysis
- Stimulus control
- Sleep hygiene
- Exercise
- Complementary treatments
 - relaxation techniques
 - physical manipulation techniques

Problems with non-pharmacological treatments

- **Require skilled personnel (who are in relatively short supply)**
- **Require patient commitment**
- **Time consuming**
- **Slow to work**
- **Expensive (seemingly)**
- **Not much good for social problems**

Problems with pharmacological treatments

- **Require skilled personnel (i.e. doctors but they are relatively available)**
- **Require patient commitment (but only to take the pills)**
- **Safer ones are slower to work & possibly less effective**
- **Safer ones are more expensive (but are still sometimes deemed affordable)**
- **Not much good for social problems**

More problems with pharmacological treatments (esp benzo's)

- Dependence
- Tolerance
- Withdrawal syndrome
- Drug-drug interactions
 - esp. other psychotropics
- Cross dependence esp with alcohol
- Street use
 - criminality
- Paradoxical effects
- Drowsiness
- Cognitive impairment
- Ataxia
- Dizziness
- Psychomotor retardation
- Increased accidents/ falls
- Apathy
- Constipation

Mental ill health in children - diagnosis

- **Anxiety**
 - Phobias
 - Separation anxiety
- **ADHD**
- **Developmental disorders**
 - Autism spectrum disorder
- **Depression**
- **Substance misuse**
- **Psychoses**
- **Behavioural problems – conduct disorders**
- **Eating disorders**

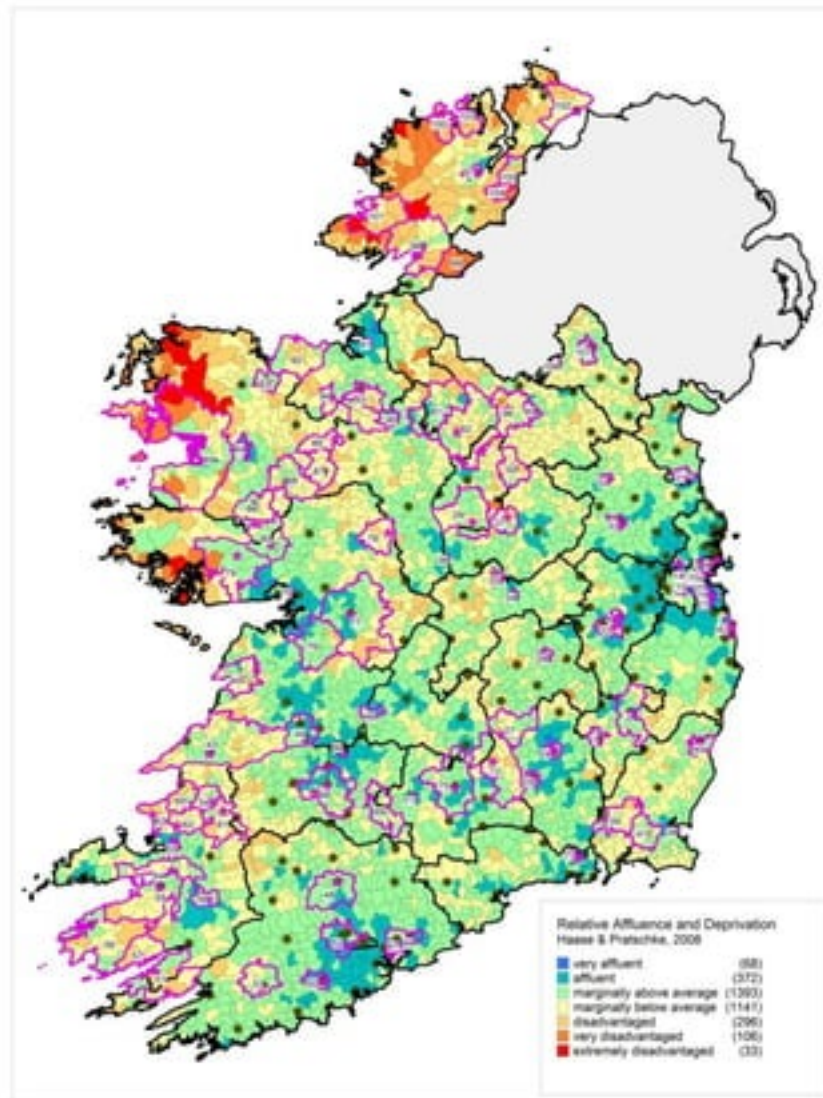
Mental ill health in children - management

- Non pharmacological treatments
- Pharmacological treatments
- Treatment in the child's context
 - Home ("the child is a barometer of the home")
 - School
- Management of co-existing/ underpinning parental mental ill health
 - very, very tricky!!

Community based family support

- **Tusla - Child and Family Agency**
 - **Family and Community Support**
 - Family resource centres (107)
 - Psychology services
 - Early years services
- **Voluntary sector**
 - Barnardos
 - ISPCC
 - Specific focus groups - COPE, Autism Action, Down's Syndrome Ireland

Family Resource Centres and Relative Affluence and Deprivation



Inter-agency working

- We all believe in it BUT we don't always do it
- Barriers for GPs
 - Concerns re CONFIDENTIALITY - lack of trust
 - Too many patients, too little time
 - Too many agencies
 - Too many different people (who change all the time)
 - Meetings are difficult to attend (time, venue etc.)
 - Meetings are not always fruitful (from our viewpoint)

Happy and unhappy families

Happy families are
all alike; each
unhappy family is
unhappy in its own
way.

Anna Karenina, Tolstoy

